



NEWS RELEASE

VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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AG ECONOMIC SURVEY WILL MEASURE FARM FINANCIAL HEALTH

Virginia's agricultural producers will have the opportunity to "let the facts be known" by participating in the 2003 Agricultural Resource Management Survey conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). This survey provides the leading economic indicators about the agricultural industry used by members of the agricultural community and their legislators when making important decisions that support America's farmers and ranchers.

Funding for Virginia's agriculture is a hot topic currently being discussed by the State's General Assembly. Nationally, the Congress continues to debate the federal budget as important decisions are being made regarding funding for agriculture. Data collected on this survey will present the only objective, true picture of the financial well-being of farm operators in Virginia and the U.S. and will provide an accurate portrayal as Congress monitors the benefits of the Farm Bill. These data are also a resource when policymakers determine Federal assistance. During 2002, the Farm Services Agency (FSA) distributed to producers \$7.3 billion in farm program payments, \$1.6 billion in conservation funding, \$2 billion in loan funds, and \$14.4 million in emergency loans.

Agricultural producers chosen to participate in the survey will represent from 50 to 100 fellow producers and will therefore make an important contribution to the overall welfare of America's farmers and ranchers. All individual data collected are held strictly confidential by law (Title 7, U.S. Code). Only statistical totals are published for selected geographic regions and the Nation. The 2003 survey will be the first to provide State-level data for 15 key agricultural States.

Results from the survey will be used by agricultural producers, producer organizations, commodity groups, lenders, university researchers, news media, local USDA agencies, farm suppliers, and others to evaluate economic challenges facing America's food and fiber producers, measure the profitability of agricultural production, assess the ability for producers to maintain sustainable farms and determine the need for farm financial assistance.

Farm Production Expenditures, the first report with results from the survey, will be released July 15, 2004. For a copy of the finished report or to obtain other agricultural statistics, visit the National Agricultural Statistics Service website at www.usda.gov/nass/ or call 1-800-727-9540.

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